

Willamette American Heritage River Initiative



About American Heritage Rivers

In July 1998, the Willamette River was designated an American Heritage River. There are only 14 American Heritage Rivers in the United States.

The American Heritage River initiative helps Willamette River communities:

- Revitalize their economy,
- Protect their environment and natural resources, and
- Preserve their history and culture.

Each American Heritage River has a River Navigator who is a liaison between basin communities and the federal government. The Navigator actively seeks resources that can be leveraged quickly to support community needs. The River Navigator does not create new regulations, lobby, interfere with state or local jurisdictional matters or take private property.

Thanks to Partners

The success of the Willamette River AHR initiative is based on locally driven and designed solutions, local support and partnerships. The primary local partner for the Willamette AHR initiative is the Willamette Restoration Initiative (WRI). WRI provides the greatest level of oversight and direction to the AHR activities. Several federal agencies, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, have funded River Navigator activities.

The Willamette Communities and organizations the River Navigator has worked with include:

City of Albany	Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
City of Canby	Paddle Oregon - A Century on the Willamette
City of Corvallis	Salem Convention and Visitors Association
City of Harrisburg	Springfield Renaissance
City of Independence	Willamette Provincial Advisory Committee
City of Portland	Willamette Provincial Interagency Executive Committee
Willamette Riverkeeper	Oregon State Parks
Willamette Urban Watershed Network	

My thanks to all the AHR partners who contributed to successes on the Willamette!



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Additional information can also be obtained at:

The AHRI website: <http://www.epa.gov/rivers/>

The WRI website: <http://www.oregonwri.org/>



January 2002

To Willamette River Communities

The American Heritage River initiative has been active in the Willamette Basin for approximately two years. As the Willamette River Navigator, it has been an exciting and interesting period. I am glad to have had the opportunity to contribute to Willamette River communities and their needs.

Recent AHR accomplishments, in support of local community needs, generally fall into three categories; funding, partnership-building and education. Immediate financial returns to communities were four times the cost of the AHR program for fiscal year 2001. Multiyear financial returns are projected to be thirteen times the cost of the program for the past year.

1. AHR provided funding for local needs by:

- Obtaining (up to) \$978,000 to support watershed groups over a three year period.
- Obtaining more than \$60,000 for Perwinkle Creek restoration in Albany.
- Obtaining \$250,000 to provide technical support and assistance to local watershed groups.
- Writing more than \$2 million in grant applications.
- Identifying additional funding opportunities and making connections to fund future projects.

2. AHR built partnerships by:

- Requesting the National Park Service to work with five cities, several counties and other interested groups to plan a potential regional river corridor system.
- Working with the Willamette Provincial Interagency Executive Committee and WRI to implement a technical assistance program for local watershed groups.

3. AHR supported informational and educational activities by:

- Leading a group to develop and implement a system of watershed restoration interpretive signs.
- Contributing to the first 'Paddle Oregon' float down the Willamette River.

I have assumed new duties in the Salem Bureau of Land Management office. Even with these new duties I hope to continue supporting Willamette River communities. Future AHR activities, with a new River Navigator, will have many of the same themes. AHR will focus on being responsive to local needs and priorities and will seek to build partnerships with communities. I expect there to be strong federal support for Willamette River related issues.

I wish you success in your future projects!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Paul Jeske'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Willamette River Navigator

Willamette AHR Highlights

FUNDING

AHR investment pays off for communities

The federal investment in the AHR initiative provided financial returns for local communities and watershed groups. Immediate financial returns (\$410,000) were four times the cost of the AHR program. Projected multiyear financial returns (\$1,298,000) resulting from fiscal year 2001 AHR efforts are thirteen times the cost of the program



\$978,000 NOAA grant awarded to assist Watershed Councils

The members of the newly created Partnership for Willamette Ecosystem Restoration (PoWER) are Willamette Restoration Initiative (WRI), Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), AHR and selected watershed groups. The River Navigator provided leadership and worked with these partners to prepare a grant proposal for NOAA's National and Regional Partnership grant program.



"The NOAA Regional Community Partnership Grant not only provides needed funding so that Willamette watershed councils can wrap up their watershed assessments and develop action plans, but it also strengthens the partnership between OWEB, WRI and AHR. Using OWEB funds as match, councils can now complete their planning efforts and move forward with strategic restoration that addresses the primary limiting factors in their watersheds. The NOAA funding is the key to getting their work done." Ken Bierly, Deputy Director for Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board.

\$60,000 grant provided to Albany, Oregon for Periwinkle Creek restoration

The River Navigator assisted the City of Albany, Oregon in obtaining an Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) grant for \$60,000. The grant will provide anadromous fish passage beyond structures in the creek that have prevented anadromous fish passage and use of the stream. Periwinkle Creek flows into the main stem of the Willamette River in Albany.

"The American Heritage Rivers program is extremely valuable in helping secure funding for projects like this. This project will provide access to high quality rearing habitat for threatened juvenile salmonids." said Cheryl Hummon, Water Resources Program Coordinator in Albany. As a result of additional grant applications prepared by the River Navigator and the City, \$35,000 was offered to the City for partial funding of Periwinkle Creek restoration project.



A barrier to anadromous fish passage in Periwinkle Creek in Albany, Oregon.

The River Navigator obtained \$250,000 to support technical assistance to watershed groups. The funds will help address the critical need for technical assistance to design and implement watershed restoration projects. The funding will be administered through the PoWER members. In addition to the funding, the project partners and a detailed federal employee developed a proposal for regional coordination of technical assistance. This proposal has been approved by the regional federal managers.

Willamette AHR Partnerships

National Park Service to help plan Willamette River Corridor Project

The National Park Service (NPS) will provide staff to assist Willamette River communities from Corvallis to Keizer to begin planning a Willamette River transportation corridor. NPS assistance resulted from discussions in WRI and AHR hosted meetings with local government representatives and a formal request for assistance submitted by WRI and AHR. Representatives from five cities (Corvallis, Albany, Independence, Salem and Keizer), three counties and several potentially interested groups have expressed their support for the project and are participating in the inter-governmental project. Similar regional projects have resulted in \$1.5 - 2 million/year in local revenues. Additional information is available at <http://www.oregonwri.org/corridorproject.html>.



Salem's Riverfront Park

Contacts enable funding for Lebanon project

The River Navigator regularly interacts with local and regional government officials. These contacts can lead to federal agency funding for local community projects. Scott Wilson of the Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments states, *"The River Navigator provided me with an excellent contact at the Corps of Engineers. As a result I was able to guide the City of Lebanon to a funding source for an innovative water treatment system."* Federal funding for the initial phase of the project is estimated to be over \$100,000, with the opportunity for a much larger long term financial investment.

Paddle Oregon floats down the Willamette River

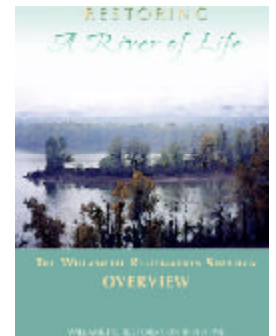


The River Navigator assisted with planning and implementing the inaugural Paddle Oregon event, a 100 mile trip down the historic Willamette River in September 2001. Travis Williams of Willamette Riverkeeper stated, *"The River Navigator was instrumental in providing educational opportunities and bringing people from a variety of backgrounds into the event."* Paddle Oregon seeks to promote education, recreation and public awareness of the Willamette River's beauty, heritage and environment. Additional information is available at www.PaddleOregon.org.

Related Events

Willamette Restoration Initiative completes restoration strategy

The primary community partner for the Willamette River Navigator, the Willamette Restoration Initiative, published *"Restoring a River of Life, The Willamette Restoration Strategy."* The River Navigator provided support for completing the Strategy and funding for placing the Strategy into a CD-ROM format available for wide distribution. The Strategy can be viewed at www.oregonwri.org. The Strategy is the Willamette Basin supplement to the *Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds* and will provide guidance to River Navigator activities.



River Navigator identifies funding opportunities for Portland River Renaissance projects.

Portland, Oregon has formally approved River Renaissance, a partnership for the revitalization of the Willamette River. The River Navigator presented information to the Portland City Council about how some of the vision components could be funded. This strategy integrates the natural, recreational, urban and economic roles that make the Willamette River vital to the city and the region. Information about River Renaissance can be viewed at http://www.planning.ci.portland.or.us/River_site/Layers.htm.



Outreach



Willamette River education takes many forms

The River Navigator provided critical assistance to a collaborative effort to use interpretive signs to tell the story of watershed restoration efforts in Corvallis, Albany, Salem and Eugene. Funds provided by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Portland General Electric will help to design and construct signs to describe restoration projects at highly visited locations. The long term goal is for a network of educational sites which could be incorporated into a brochure and website for a 'restoration tour.'

Conferences address Willamette River issues

The River Navigator presented information about funding opportunities to attendees at the Lewis and Clark Law School conference on the Willamette River. Information from that presentation was incorporated into a video and made available to communities and other interested groups.

The River Navigator worked with the Willamette Urban Watershed Network to plan and host a conference titled "At the Waters Edge." The conference focused on science based approaches to managing urban riparian areas for salmonid protection and recovery. Information on the Urban Watershed Network and the conference can be seen at <http://www.wuw-net.org/>



"Your financial contribution helped us to bring together many of the best scientists in the region to share the latest research on defining and managing urban riparian areas for fish recovery. Your contribution also helped us to create an affordable educational experience for more than 200 participants." Neil Bjorklund, WUW-Net Chair.



Outlook

There is strong federal support for Willamette River related issues and the American Heritage River initiative. At the national level, the White House Council of Environmental Quality has recently affirmed its immediate support for AHR. A letter from James Connaughton, Chairman of the Council of Environmental Quality, to the fourteen designated rivers states,

“ The previous Administration made a commitment that the AHRI would exist for five years, until July 30, 2003, after which time it would be up to federal agencies to decide whether to continue providing appropriate services as part of their ongoing activities. . . . We have reviewed the initiative and, given the level of success it has enjoyed, the level of support from participating communities and interest by others in participating, we have determined that it is appropriate to honor the five-year commitment. . . . We will continue to review the AHRI to determine its future beyond 2003, including any improvements that may be made during this intervening period. We will be discussing the Initiative and continued support for it with participating federal agencies in the near future. . . . I commend you for your dedication to and success with, the Initiative thus far and urge you to continue serving your communities as well as you have. “

Willamette AHR activities will be responsive to local needs and priorities. To some degree, greater emphasis may be placed on projects which can be substantially completed by July 2003.

Future areas of emphasis for the River Navigator include:

#1. Seeking funding for priority community projects. Examples include:

- Development of proposals and funding stream bank protection for water treatment facilities
- Implementation of riverfront Master Plans
- Funds to acquire riverfront park property

#2. Supporting regional initiatives

- Developing projects to support WRI Restoration Strategy Critical Actions
- Researching and collecting information for the Willamette Regional Corridor process
- Developing and funding a Watershed Technical Assistance program for the Willamette



Willamette River near Harrisburg water treatment facility.

#3. Increasing awareness of potential forms of government assistance.

The River Navigator will work with Willamette Restoration Initiative to host a “River Connection” conference in the spring of 2002. This conference will identify resources available to communities’ and some of the benefits associated with building the communities connection with the river.

#4. Building partnerships with business and other non-governmental organizations.



Historic downtown Independence, Oregon.



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